

## Famous Last Words



What was it they tried to do Nancy? the Hungarian Paloc Martogatos, the Czech Kanafaska, the Norwegian Rheinlander, or what? But — How true! This is another drawing by "OUR" (quotations my own) Nancy Borgman of Minnesota.

### THE UNITED STATES — A RETROSPECT

by the Hon. Sec. Maude Karpeles

To say that the Indiana Conference went "according to plan" would be an understatement. Certainly the careful organization of our hosts, who foresaw all our needs and left nothing to chance, was largely responsible for the smooth running of the Conference, but good organization alone does not transform a heterogeneous mass of individuals into a united community with a common purpose. To effect this, kindness and human understanding are necessary and these gifts were supplied in full measure by our American friends. The Conference was an example of true democracy, arising from respect for the individual, in which every one felt free to make his contribution and no one dominated the proceedings unduly.

For me, as for many other non-American members, the Conference was the prelude to a round of enjoyable experiences, in which the same warm-hearted friendliness was encountered. Most of us visited Washington at some time or other and were received with open-armed hospitality at the Library of Congress where we browsed to our hearts' content in the Folk Lore Archive of the music Division.

A series of lectures on the English and Anglo-American folk song tradition and a three-and-a-half weeks' expedition to the Southern Appalachian Mountains accounted for the rest of my American visit. The purpose of my mountain excursion was to follow up my footsteps of thirty years ago, when I had collected folk songs of English origin with the late Cecil Sharp. Then, there were few roads through the mountains and the people

were living self-contained lives almost completely shut off from the rest of the world. Cecil Sharp and I spent fifty weeks in the mountains and during that time we never heard a bad tune; if anyone sang at all it was a folk song. Now, roads and electricity have brought "civilization" into the mountains. The roads have made markets accessible and the people are busy earning a living but there is less time to enjoy life. Electricity has brought the radio, and "hill-billy" can be heard at any time of the day, but genuine folk songs which were previously so plentiful must now be patiently sought. With most of the singers memory has weakened, but the love of the old songs still lies dormant and it requires only a little encouragement for it to spring up anew. It was a great delight to many a singer to be able to re-learn a forgotten song from the printed version made from his singing of thirty years ago. Thus, a song originating in England is carried orally to America and develops there; perhaps, a couple of hundred years it is brought back to England in written form; thirty years later the published song is carried back to the country of its adoption and again takes on a new lease of life. Through such vicissitudes does tradition persist.

(Bulletin of the International Folk Music Council. By Permission).

### REGARDING THE CZECH BESEDA

This brief article is in response to letters regarding the Czech Beseda and available records.

The Besedas are Czech "Jarabes" — compositions or compilations of various short regional dances put together into one elaborate dance; what the Jarabes mean to various regions of Mexico the Beseda means the same to Czechoslovakia. The popular Beseda best known in the United States existed at the turn of the 20th century and is rather of national character, as is the Jarabe Taptio from Jalisco which likewise assumed a national character. The steps are fairly stable, tho minor variation in form of interpretations might also appear here and there, but such variations are of no consequence.

I regret to say I have not heard Imperial Beseda records and have no idea whether they are right or wrong. The Imperial record reputation is an extremely shaky one; much of their music does not follow traditional patterns. Then, again, some are quite good. Not having heard their Beseda I can not pass judgment.

The Beseda recorded by the Czech Relief Committee and being popularized by Michael Herman is very good and not so good, because that album was recorded without any consultation of any folk dance leaders and for an entirely special reason. It was recorded for raising funds for Czech relief and NOT to supply folk dancers with much needed Beseda records; therefore, it was played to appeal to a listening audience who are in the majority. The Beseda is a collection of very melodic tunes, some are exotic and some are exciting, all have possibilities for terrific musical expression, and when recording it the musicians took advantage of all these possibilities and made out of it a piece of pleasing chamber music. As a result, some sections were either played too fast or played too slow and the dances have to juggle around their tempi rather unnaturally. Many repeats have been omitted. True, it makes a very long dance somewhat shorter, but that will not be of any help to such people who might wish to dance the Beseda in its completeness.

The truest recording for the folk dancer are the Columbia green label records, but, alas, they are not avail-

able at present.

H. T. FitzSimmons Co., of Chicago, published the notes for Piano. Miss Neva Boyd, also a Chicago folk dance pioneer who worked a great deal among the Czechs, notated the description in English and it is also available along with the notes from FitzSimmons Co. Tho most anyone can decipher descriptions of a dance, one should try likewise to learn the character of the dance, which can't be put down in words. Miss Boyd's description however, is very clear.



### SIXTH ANNUAL BARRINGTON FOLK FESTIVAL

On Feb. 17th, the High School Gym of Barrington, Ill., a town some 35 miles northwest of Chicago, held the Sixth Annual United Nations Festival. It is to the credit of Mr. Truman Chiles, and the high school where he is a staff member, that they are able to present so successfully such wonderful festivals. Tho Chicago supplies practically all of the talent, it ays behind in obtaining the general support that is needed to attain such success as was seen in Barrington.

The first half of the program was on the stately and quiet side (except for the Germans who closed the first half). Big Timber Kno-Ski Dancers from Elgin, Ill., under the direction of Mr. Carl Parlaska, opened both halves of the program. Their first number, "The Pine Trees", was based on a legendary dream by a medicine man in which the future history of the Ojibway Indians is unfolded — the destruction of pine trees by the invading White Men. These dancers are an interesting group of youngsters who now have a successful tradition of 25 years of Indian dancing. They make their own costumes and are strict adherents to traditino; their work is praiseworthy. In regard to artistry, true presentation and perfection, the Indians (all white teen agers) were the best and most interesting of the entire program.

English dances were presented by a group of Chicago University students who meet at Ida Noyes hall and who are trained by Miss Jean Simmons. They danced the Boatman, Lumps of Plum Pudding, Nonsuch, Parson's Farewell and Newcastle. All numbers were performed with the ease, stalliness and freedom that characterizes the English dances. They did a very excellent job.

The Norwegians were divided into two groups, the juniors and the grown-ups, members of the Leikarigen Heimhig under the direction of Arne Aalrust. The Juniors danced Seksmansril and Klap Dance; the latter is also popular among the Swedes. The elders performed Sorlandspirnger and Tremannspolska in a manner that upheld the good reputation which this Norse group has achieved.

A group of people of various ages, from Rhineland, Mo., appeared next to portray a synopsis of a pre-lenten carnival of "Wurst Jaegers" (Sausage Chasers), a German custom brought by the original German emigrants from the Rheinland who settled in Missouri; the custom is still practiced in the present town of Rhineland, Mo. Their costumes were of carnival nature. They came on with a band and were led by men carrying poles hung with Wurst (Sausages). Barrington, also boasting in the main a population of German ancestry, received them with an ovation. Tho their dancing was devoid of polish, they, nevertheless, danced it with sincerity and with loads of fun. All dances performed were of the ballroom

variety, popular not only in the German Palatinate but in many parts of the world: Herr Schmidt, Heel and Toe Polka, a simple Rheinlander, Seven steps, Finger Polka, Freut Euch Das Leben (which they called Waltz "Fur Drei"), Lots IstTo dt (The Raatiko, they called it "The Gallop" and Rye Waltz). They were an enjoyable group and danced without any inhibitions. Among the participants were their present Mayor, Al Hagerdon, and two ex-payors, while the mayor of Barrington also sat in the audience. Mr. Fritz Theissen was the director of the group and band.

After the intermission the white Indians from Elgin came on with the fascinating dance of the Hummingbird, a spring dance celebrating the arrival of the first hummingbird. It was spectacular, intriguing and the finest number on the program.

The Lithuanian folk dancers, ATEITIS, made their usual hit with their presentation of Suksciis, Ozelis (The Goat Dance), Ziogelis (Grasshoppers), Blenzdingele (Swallows) and Vestuviu (The Wedding Polka), thus retaining their laurels.

The host group, the Barrington High School Dancers of Mr. Truman Chiles, appeared next. They are a fine, clean cut group of youngsters who love their dances and do them well. First they performed a medley of American squares, then a group of couple dances, but their forte were their medley of Cowboy square dances. They performed it as good as anyone ever could even at the source. The applause they received was well deserved and it was thundrous. Bravo to Mr. Chiles and his youngsters.

The Russians closed the program with Yula and Moldavanets (two Moldavian dances), gay, virle and vivacious dances; the Accordion Serenade, an ever beloved Russian flirtatious dance and two other Russian folk dances. The nature of their dances, and the agility of the dancers who are trained by Mr. Alex Karaczun, always evokes admiration from the onlookers who admire the feat of doing impossible-looking steps with a seeming facil agility.

After the program all participants covered the floor doing a Polka, then, went to partake of the generous refreshments prepared by the school, and, finally, hurried home in a happy mood and in good spirits. VFB.

### CHICAGO DANCE COUNCIL PRESENTED JOSE CASTRO

On the afternoon of February 18th, the Chicago Dance Council presented Jose Castro and his pupils at the Thorne Hall of Northwestern University. The afternoon was spent in the form of lecture-demonstration. Mr. Castro, using his able pupils as the class, portrayed the series involved in the study of castanets and the various hand and foot movements required to reach an advanced stage in Spanish dancing. During the second half of the demonstration he and his talented students demonstrated gracefully and with great skill the various Spanish rhythms: boleros, paso dobles, jotás, alegrias, flamenco dances and the classic (not ballroom) tangos. It was a very worthwhile, educational and entertaining program, and of great value to lay people who might think that there is nothing to Spanish dancing. Mr. Castro is a Chicagoan of good reputation in the dance field and his Mexican and Spanish programs have always been well received.

The next Chicago Dance Council date is set for the afternoon of April 8th also at Thorne Hall. Rhythmic movements for children will be taught. Everyone is welcome.